

## Health Update:

### Update 1: Prevention and Management of Infectious Diseases and Other Conditions Affecting Hurricane Katrina Evacuees

**September 14, 2005**

This document will be updated as new information becomes available. The current version can always be viewed at <http://www.dhss.mo.gov>

The Missouri Department of Health & Senior Services (DHSS) is now using 4 types of documents to provide important information to medical and public health professionals, and to other interested persons:

**Health Alerts** convey information of the highest level of importance which warrants immediate action or attention from Missouri health providers, emergency responders, public health agencies, and/or the public.

**Health Advisories** provide important information for a specific incident or situation, including that impacting neighboring states; may not require immediate action.

**Health Guidances** contain comprehensive information pertaining to a particular disease or condition, and include recommendations, guidelines, etc. endorsed by DHSS.

**Health Updates** provide new or updated information on an incident or situation; can also provide information to update a previously sent Health Alert, Health Advisory, or Health Guidance; unlikely to require immediate action.

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**SUBJECT:** [Update 1: Prevention and Management of Infectious Diseases and Other Conditions Affecting Hurricane Katrina Evacuees](#)

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has recently provided new or updated information on several issues related to persons impacted by Hurricane Katrina. It is important to note that while some of these materials were developed primarily for community evacuation centers, they all include information which is clearly applicable to settings other than evacuation centers.

#### **Infectious Disease Prevention**

Updated infectious disease prevention recommendations for community evacuation centers and non-residential evacuation centers (e.g., stadiums, churches) are available at <http://www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/commshelters.asp>. This updated information replaces that found in Appendix B of the September 6, 2005, Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services (DHSS) Health Advisory: *Prevention of Infectious Diseases in Community Shelters Housing Hurricane-Displaced Persons*.

#### **Diarrheal Disease Prevention**

New recommendations for prevention of diarrheal diseases in evacuation centers are available at <http://www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/hurricanes/katrina/diarrheal.asp>. Additionally, a fact sheet for evacuation center residents providing information on diseases which cause diarrhea and/or vomiting, as well as guidance on prevention, is available at <http://www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/hurricanes/katrina/factsforresidents.asp>. This fact sheet contains several important recommendations, including the following:

- Ensure food is stored, cooked, prepared, and served in a hygienic manner.
- Wash hands often. Wash hands after using the bathroom or changing diapers, and before eating or preparing food. Wash hands more often when helping someone who has diarrhea or vomiting.
- Avoid shaking hands during outbreaks.
- Use alcohol-based hand rubs when soap and water are not nearby.
- For those who are ill, move with your family to an area of the evacuation center set apart for those who are ill and their immediate families. This decreases the chances of infecting other people.

#### **Tuberculosis Prevention**

Updated tuberculosis prevention guidance for persons impacted by Hurricane Katrina is available at <http://www.cdc.gov/nchstp/tb/katrina/default.htm>. This updated material replaces that found in the September 8, 2005, DHSS Health Advisory: *Information on Tuberculosis Prevention in the Aftermath of Hurricane Katrina*.

The following recommendations regarding tuberculin skin testing (TST), which were emphasized in the September 8<sup>th</sup> Health Advisory, remain valid:

- CDC's Division of Tuberculosis Elimination (and DHSS) do not recommend TST to screen asymptomatic persons now in evacuation centers or other congregate settings, unless they have been exposed to a person with infectious TB.
- It is not recommended that emergency response healthcare workers (HCWs) and volunteers be tuberculin skin tested unless they have been exposed to a person with infectious TB.

### **Pediatric Environmental Health Specialty Units**

Medical and public health professionals should be aware of the assistance that can be obtained from Pediatric Environmental Health Specialty Units (PEHSUs). PEHSUs are a national network of clinics providing health professionals free clinical advice by phone about potential pediatric environmental health concerns affecting both the child and the family. Funded by the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), PEHSUs provide education and consultation for health professionals, public health professionals and others about the topic of children's environmental health. A directory of PEHSUs is available from ATSDR at:

<http://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/HEC/natorg/pehsu.html>.

### **Additional Information**

More hurricane-related information for medical and public health professionals is available from CDC at <http://www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/hurricanes/hcp.asp>. Among the topics covered are immunizations, medical records, infection control, medical management, patient advisement, handling human remains, and dialysis care. Previous DHSS Health Advisories and Health Updates are available on DHSS' Hurricane Recovery Efforts website at [http://www.dhss.mo.gov/BT\\_Response/Recovery.html](http://www.dhss.mo.gov/BT_Response/Recovery.html). This website also contains information for licensed Missouri medical professionals (and others) who wish to volunteer to assist in the hurricane recovery effort.

CDC's Hurricane Katrina Health & Safety website (<http://www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/hurricanes/index.asp>) provides additional information for several specific groups, including evacuees and other affected persons, response and cleanup workers, evacuation centers, and schools.

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The occurrence of known or suspected infectious diseases among hurricane evacuees should be reported to the local public health agency, or to DHSS at 800/392-0272 (24/7).

If anyone receiving this Health Update needs to access any of the linked materials and is unable to do so (e.g., because of lack of Internet access), contact DHSS' Center for Emergency Response and Terrorism at 573/526-4768, or 800/392-0272 (24/7).

Questions should be directed to DHSS' Disease Investigation Unit at 573/751-6122, or 866/628-9891 (24/7).